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Curriculum Navigation Report
Bluebonnet Learning, Grades K-5

REPORT INTRODUCTION

Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines Description

“Decisions regarding curriculum, instructional approaches, programs, and resources are critical and must be informed by more than experience, observations, or even belief systems. If we are to succeed in implementing effective practices, then we will need to embrace learning as a part of our work as much as teaching itself.” (Hennessy, 2020, p. 8)

Due to the popularity of the science of reading movement, the term “science of reading” has been used as a marketing tool, promising a quick fix for administrators and decision-makers seeking a product to check a box next to this buzzword. However, as articulated in The Reading League’s [Science of Reading: Defining Guide](#) (2022),

the “science of reading” is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. Over the last five decades, this research has provided a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some students have difficulty; and how educators can most effectively assess and teach, and, therefore, improve student outcomes through the prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties. (p.6)

Accordingly, The Reading League’s [Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines](#) (CEGs) is a resource developed to assist consumers in making informed decisions when selecting curricula and instructional materials that best support evidence-aligned instruction grounded in the science of reading.

This resource is anchored by frameworks validated by findings from the science of

reading research that provide additional understandings that substantiate both aligned and non-aligned practices (i.e., “red flags”) within the CEGs. These serve as a foundation for what to expect from published curricula that claim to be aligned with the scientific evidence of how students learn to read. The CEGs highlight best practices that align with the science of reading, while red flags specify any non-aligned practices in the following areas:



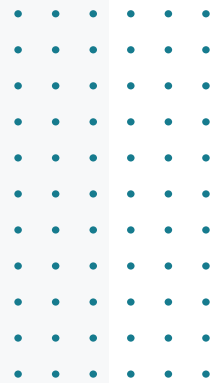
- Word Recognition

- Language Comprehension

- Reading Comprehension

- Writing

- Assessment



The CEGs have been used by educators, building and district leaders, local education agencies, and state education agencies as a primary tool to find evidence of red flags, or practices that may interfere with the development of skilled reading. While the CEGs have been useful for schools and districts for informing curricular and

instructional decision-making, The Reading League recognized the challenge of school-based teams that might not have the capacity for an in-depth review process. In the spirit of its mission to advance the awareness, understanding, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction, expert review teams engaged in a large-scale review of the most widely used curricula currently used in the United States in order to develop informative reports of each.

This report was generated after a review of the curriculum using the revised Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines, 3rd Edition, published in 2026. The Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines have been refined based on feedback and a lengthy pilot review, and have undergone an inter-rater reliability study with positive results. As you read through the findings of this report, remember that red flags will be present for all curricula as there is no perfect curriculum. The intent of this report is not to provide a recommendation, but rather to provide information to local education agencies to support their journey of selecting, using, and refining instruction and instructional materials to ensure they align with the science of reading.

*Disclaimer: The Reading League's curriculum review is deemed an informational educational resource **and should not be construed as sales pitches or product promotion.** The purpose of the review is to further our mission to advance the understanding, awareness, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction.*








CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

The evaluation on the following pages features the review of Bluebonnet Learning, which is created for students in Grades K-5. Bluebonnet Learning offers state-created instructional materials that fully align with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). For this report, reviewers closely examined materials in the Foundational Skills component designed for students in Grades K-3 and the materials in the Reading Language Arts component designed for students in Grades K-5.

The Foundational Skills materials included a review of Program-Level Resources, Course-Level Documents, Teacher Guides, Unit and Lesson Internalization Protocols, Activity Books, Consonant Code Flip Books, Spelling Cards, Digital Components, Family Support Letters, Individual Code Charts, Readers, and the Vowel Code Flip Book. The Reading Language Arts materials included a review of Program-Level Resources, Course-Level Documents, Teacher Guides, Unit and Lesson Internalization Protocols, Activity Books, Digital Components, Essential Questions and Prompts, Family Support Letters, Flip Books, Image Cards, and Readers.

Reviewers were selected based on their deep knowledge of the science of reading and associated terminology as well as high-quality instructional materials. Once selected, they were assigned to teams of at least three reviewers. The team met regularly to establish reliability in their individual scores based on the Red Flag rubric that follows and to report their findings. For a more comprehensive review process description, visit [The Reading League Compass's Curriculum Decision Makers page](#).

	<h2>01</h2> <p>Red Flag statement is False.</p>		<h2>02</h2> <p>Red Flag statement is minimally True. Evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned.</p>
	<h2>03</h2> <p>Red Flag statement is mostly True. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum.</p>		<h2>04</h2> <p>Red Flag statement is always True, pervasive, and/or integral to the curriculum.</p>
	<p>A black box indicates that this component is not addressed in this curriculum and must be addressed with other materials.</p>		

Reviewers used the notes section of each component to capture helpful evidence and notes, such as keywords that described a practice listed within the CEGs, specific examples, and precise locations of evidence. Notes were included in the review of any optional aligned components as well.

OVERALL DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Identification of the following red flag practices was prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>OVERALL DESIGN AND DELIVERY</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
<p>No evidence of deliberate and purposeful practice: “These two terms refer to practice that goes beyond rote repetition and involves practicing for a purpose (e.g., accuracy, fluent retrieval, generalization) with the deliberate goal of long-term improvement of skill performance” (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 406).</p>	2
<p>No evidence of retrieval practice: Retrieval practice “consists of tasks requiring retrieval of targeted skills and knowledge from memory without prompts or cues” (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 407). “Retrieval practice is a strategy in which calling information to mind subsequently enhances and boosts learning” (Agarwal, Roediger, McDaniel, & McDermott, 2020, p. 2).</p>	2
<p>No evidence of spaced or distributed practice: Spaced or distributed practice “involves taking a given amount of time devoted to learning and arranging that time into multiple sessions that are spread over time” (Carpenter & Agarwal, 2019, p. 3).</p>	1
<p>No evidence of cumulative practice: Cumulative practice is “the systematic addition of a just-learned skill to previously learned and related skills, allowing them to be practiced together” (Hughes & Lee, 2019, p. 414; Archer & Hughes, 2011). “It requires that new (and usually related) skills are added to a practice activity as they are acquired, thus providing distributed practice for multiple skills within one session” (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 407).</p>	3
<p>No evidence of interleaved practice: Interleaved practice “is similar to cumulative practice but involves mixing the order of skills and problems to be practiced by distributing them in a random fashion, causing the learner to have to discriminate” (Kirschner, P. & Hendrick, C., 2020).</p>	3
<p>Student Interest: The materials are generally not intrinsically interesting and engaging for most students in that grade.</p>	1
<p>Cohesion: The program components are disjointed and not seamlessly related to one another. Instruction based on the science of reading must be integrated, acknowledging the impact of various component skills upon each other.</p>	2
<p>Usability: The materials are confusing and/or difficult to manage and use in a classroom setting.</p>	3

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers observed that the program features a wide variety of activities for students to practice new skills. However, they noted there could be opportunities for more explicit and purposeful practice in reading words in the foundational skills sections. For example, decoding practice occurs primarily through passive activities in the Student Activity Book that don't require students to decode words. The review team noted an example from Grade 2, Unit 3, Lesson 16, where learners are provided words with /ue/ sounds, including "u_e," "ue," and "u," and must fill in the blank with a word from the given word box. This activity does not require students to engage in the process of decoding, which limits opportunities for applying phonics skills in a meaningful way.

Bluebonnet's curricular units center on a single topic within each unit, enabling students to build knowledge in a focused and coherent way. These topics also connect across grade levels, and the review team found evidence that students were prompted to recall previously learned content. However, there was limited and inconsistent evidence of retrieval practice embedded within the foundational skills lessons. While reviewers noted that foundational skills are taught over a series of days or weeks and that the program's Student Activity Books are designed to support distributed practice, there was limited evidence of intentional practice of previously learned foundational skills.

Bluebonnet's curricular materials are designed in a way to appeal to students, and reviewers noted that the read-aloud texts are written to effectively capture students' interest. Additionally, games are frequently incorporated into foundational skills lessons to make practice interactive and engaging. The program's components are generally well integrated. For example, in the early grades, grammar and writing are taught in conjunction with foundational skills rather than as separate entities. While there is clear cohesion within the foundational skills strand and the language comprehension strand, there is little evidence of cohesion between these two strands, as foundational skills and comprehension are taught separately. Finally, reviewers noted that having access only to online materials made the program challenging to implement. The sheer volume of pages was overwhelming, and without a clear scope and sequence, it was difficult to identify cohesion across units and grade levels.

FINDINGS:

Components Supporting Word Recognition

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Identification of the following red flag practices was prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
1.1: The three-cueing system is taught as a strategy for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	1
1.2: Guidance is given to memorize any whole words, including high-frequency words, by sight without attending to the letter-sound correspondences.	1
1.3: Supporting materials do not provide a systematic scope and sequence nor opportunities for practice and review of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Bluebonnet Learning’s curriculum overview clearly notes the problems associated with the three-cueing system and places an emphasis on the simple view of reading:

The program uses a synthetic phonics approach that teaches students to read by blending through the word. It does not teach multiple cueing strategies, use of pictures as a primary resource in decoding, or part-word guessing. (Bluebonnet Learning, Grade K Teacher Guide: Foundational Skills 1 Introduction, p. 1)

Activities such as segmenting, blending, and sound-spelling associations are explicitly used to teach decoding.

Bluebonnet teaches high-frequency words as “tricky” words. During instruction, the Teacher Guide prompts educators to point out both the tricky and decodable parts of these words. The program describes a tricky word as a word that students cannot fully decode using the letter-sound correspondences they have learned up to that point; its pronunciation does not completely match its spelling. While these words include some irregular elements, most also contain parts that can be sounded out. When teaching them, educators should highlight which parts follow typical phonics patterns and which parts are irregular and need to be memorized. For example, students learn that “of” is a tricky word because it isn’t pronounced the way it looks. The teacher is prompted to write the word on the board, ask students how they would sound it out, and explain that instead of /ɔf /, it is pronounced /ʊv/. The tricky parts are the

letter “o” making the /ü/ sound and the “f” making the /v/ sound. Students are reminded to think about the tricky parts of the word when reading and spelling it. They then use “of” in an oral sentence and add it to the Tricky Word Wall.

Bluebonnet includes a single scope and sequence document aligned to Texas State Standards, with guidance on the suggested time allotment for each skill. However, the document lists standards by number only, making it difficult to determine which specific skills align with each standard. The team strongly recommends expanding the scope and sequence to include a brief description of each standard or skill to improve clarity and usability for educators.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEME AWARENESS</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
1.7: Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) as a focus of instruction without moving to the phoneme level.	1
1.8: Blends such as /b/ /l/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds.	1
1.9: Students do not practice the phonemes as soon as they learn the graphemes.	1
1.10: Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	1
1.11: Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	1
1.12: Phoneme awareness is not assessed and monitored (e.g., a student’s ability to identify the initial, final, and medial phonemes in a word).	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Phoneme awareness is taught as a foundational reading skill and the program explicitly states that it focuses on the phoneme level and not on the larger units of sound. In fact, students learn to read words that feature “onsets, rimes, and consonant clusters, but they learn to view and process these larger units as combinations of smaller phoneme-level units” (Grade 1 Teacher

Guide, p. 306). Blending and segmenting are central instructional practices for introducing new sounds and patterns, and students use Elkonin boxes as a scaffold for segmenting and blending words. The program also requires students to segment words into individual sounds and attend to how those sounds blend together to form whole words.

Bluebonnet also introduces students to the phoneme before introducing the associated grapheme. This follows a speech-to-print approach. For example, when learning about the medial sounds /ee/ and /e/, the teacher first introduces the target sound and has students repeat it several times. They then practice hearing it in different word positions—at the beginning (e.g., “eat,” “each,” “east,” “eagle”), in the middle (e.g., “peace,” “greet,” “meat,” “heat”), and at the end (e.g., “bee,” “me,” “key,” “tree”). Students learn that /ee/ is a vowel sound produced with an open mouth and unobstructed airflow. Students then listen as the teacher says various words and raise their hands when they hear a word with the /ee/ sound in the middle. In fact, students are consistently taught to observe their mouth placement when producing sounds, recognizing that consonants involve some obstruction of airflow, while vowels do not. Mirrors are also used to help each student visually notice how their mouth and lips move when articulating different sounds.

Finally, the review team found evidence of phoneme awareness assessments, though guidance on their use was limited to specific lessons. To strengthen instructional continuity, the team recommends incorporating phoneme awareness assessments holistically across all grades to ensure ongoing monitoring of students’ phonemic development and to inform targeted instructional support.



1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR PHONICS AND PHONIC DECODING	SCORE
1.17: Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	1
1.18: Instruction is typically “one and done”; phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	1
1.19: The first letters of key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ō/).	2
1.20: Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) “mini-lessons” or “word work” sessions.	1
1.21: The initial instructional sequence introduces many (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, short vowels are all taught in rapid succession, and/or all sounds for one letter are taught all at once.	1
1.22: Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	1
1.23: Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, read using the first letter only as a clue, guess at words in context using a “What would make sense?” strategy, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	1
1.24: Words with known letter-sound correspondences, including high-frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as standalone “sight words” to be memorized.	1
1.25: There are few opportunities provided for word-level decoding practice of new phonics patterns and interleaving practice for prior phonics patterns.	2
1.26: Early texts are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts which include phonic elements that have not been taught; decodable texts are not used or emphasized.	1
1.27: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5): Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	1
1.28: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5): There is no evident instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Letter-sound correspondences are explicitly taught when each new pattern is introduced. A speech-to-print method is utilized when introducing new patterns. For example, when introducing the spelling of /oo/, teachers first tell students they will learn to write the sound /oo/. The teacher then writes “oo” on the guidelines as they explain what they’re doing. Teachers are prompted to tell students that the sound /oo/ is spelled with the vowel team “oo,” and then the teacher models spelling the word while saying the spelling two or three times. Students then trace the spelling on their desks while saying the sound to themselves. Bluebonnet also uses its sound/spelling cards as visual support, and students keep their own copy of a sound/spelling book they can reference when needed.

Phonics instruction has a dedicated time block in Grades K-2. This includes 30-60 minutes of instruction integrated with grammar and writing. Grade 3 has an optional 30-minute phonics block, which can be completed on its own or integrated into the language portion of the reading block. Finally, Grades 4 and 5 have integrated phonics instruction. Reviewers noted that while kindergarten includes a review section at the beginning of each lesson, Grades 1-5 have limited opportunities to explicitly review previously learned skills. These skills do appear within decodable texts, but they are not explicitly reviewed or reinforced through direct instruction.

One area the team identified as problematic is the use of keywords for vowel sounds where the vowel is in the medial position. For example, the short vowel sounds for “a,” “e,” and “o” are represented by the keywords “pat,” “pet,” and “hop.” This approach can be challenging because vowels in the middle of words are more prone to distortion if not pronounced accurately, particularly for students in a southern state who may have dialect differences. Therefore, reviewers recommended replacing these keywords with ones in which the vowel appears at the beginning of the word, making the sound easier to isolate and model. Bluebonnet also uses “it” as the keyword for the short vowel “i,” which could be challenging for beginning learners as it lacks a concrete or meaningful association. The publisher clarified that there are several keywords used that do feature the pure phoneme; however, the review team cautioned against using multiple keywords for a single letter-sound correspondence, as it can be confusing for students.

Regarding the instructional sequence of consonants and vowels, both are introduced by utility, and the most common spellings are taught before alternative spellings. The program also uses a synthetic phonics approach, and students learn to read by blending through the whole word. Blending routines are utilized whenever a new phoneme is introduced. Bluebonnet also emphasizes a speech-to-print approach and teaches letter-sound correspondences instead of encouraging students to memorize whole words or guess. When students do encounter an unknown word part, they are encouraged to look back at their individual code chart, which they use to record vowel and consonant sound/spelling correspondences. Students are encouraged to use this resource when reading and writing to help them recall what they’ve learned.

High-frequency words, referred to in Bluebonnet as tricky words, are taught by having students identify the decodable parts of each word and underline the irregular parts that do not follow expected phonics patterns. This approach ensures that students focus on understanding word structure rather than simply memorizing words. For example, students learn that “some” is a tricky word because it is not pronounced the way it looks. The teacher begins by writing the word on the board and asking students how they would blend and pronounce it. The teacher then explains that it is pronounced /s/ /ŭ/ /m/, as in “I would like some rice.” The teacher points out that the “s” and “m” make their expected sounds, while the letters “o” and “e” form the tricky part of the word. Students are reminded to use this pronunciation when reading “some” and to spell the /ŭ/ sound with “o” and “e” when writing it. Finally, students use “some” orally during a turn and talk, and the class adds the word to the Tricky Word Wall.

Reviewers noted that Grades 1-3 provide limited opportunities for whole-group, word-level decoding practice of new phonics patterns or for interleaving practice that reinforces previously taught patterns. They observed that such opportunities were more evident in kindergarten. However, much of the students’ word-level practice consisted of activity pages distributed by the teacher. Bluebonnet does provide decodable texts that match the target skills taught in each lesson. For example, in one first-grade decodable reader, students review CVC and CCVC words. Within the text, underlined words represent the tricky words introduced in the lesson, and newly introduced patterns are in bold print for students to notice. All reading materials are fully decodable, consisting of either familiar phonics patterns or previously taught Tricky Words. This design allows students to gain confidence in reading texts that match their current decoding knowledge before progressing to words and stories with more complex spelling variations.

Multisyllabic word instruction and morphology are taught explicitly. In Grade 1, students encounter two-syllable words that include combinations of the following syllable types: magic “e” (silent e), vowel digraph, r-controlled vowel, and closed syllables. They also practice chunking, or dividing, these words into syllables using predictable patterns. This includes examples like “tar/get,” “for/get,” “es/cape,” “ig/loo,” “scoun/drel,” and “char/coal.” In Grades 2 and 3, students progress to more challenging multisyllabic words and learn to divide two-syllable words with only one consonant between vowels. These words are harder to segment because the division can occur either before or after the single consonant, requiring students to apply flexible strategies for syllable division.

1D: Fluency

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR FLUENCY</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
1.42: Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	1
1.43: Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	1
1.44: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	2
1.45: Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	1
1.46: Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., accepting the word "house" instead of the printed word "home").	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Students have regular opportunities to listen to the teacher model fluent reading and to engage in daily partner reading. Teachers also allocate small-group time for students to practice reading, and repeated readings are encouraged to support the development of accuracy and automaticity. In addition, reading with expression is emphasized as an important component of fluent reading. In one fluency lesson, the teacher models expressive reading by varying tone, pace, and emphasis while reading the first sentences of a passage aloud. Students observe and discuss how the teacher's voice changes to reflect meaning. They then read the text aloud themselves, practicing intonation and expression. Next, students work with a partner to read a short dialogue by deciding who will take each role and practicing fluent reading together. Partners provide feedback to each other on tone, pacing, and phrasing, discussing how these elements convey meaning.

Words correct per minute (WCPM) scoring is emphasized during ORF monitoring, and teachers are taught to calculate WCPM scores. This emphasizes accuracy over rate. Additionally, fluency assessment procedures do not allow for incorrectly decoded words. In fact, Bluebonnet has specific scoring procedures for omissions, insertions, incorrectly decoded words, substitutions, self-corrected errors, and teacher-provided words.

Bluebonnet does include word-level fluency assessments, and the team noted that practice at this level was limited to student activity pages. As such, reviewers suggested including additional opportunities for word-level decoding practice. They did note that letter chaining is one activity used to practice fluency at the word level. For example, in one lesson, students chain words like: spin → spoon → soon → seem → seed → sad → lad → loud → cloud. Additional support materials include the use of word sorts and bingo, but again, these emphasize the use of student activity pages. Students are offered multiple opportunities for fluency practice with decodable text, and Bluebonnet features additional fluency passages for Grades 2-5 that include poetry, fiction, and non-fiction options.

FINDINGS:

Components Supporting Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

SECTIONS 2-4: Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

This section begins with a review of non-negotiable elements for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing before moving on to the language comprehension strands highlighted in Scarborough's reading rope. Therefore, identification of the following red flag practices was prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
2-4.1: (LC, RC, W) In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.	1
2-4.2: (LC, RC, W) Students are not exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials.	1
2-4.3: (RC) Comprehension activities focus mainly on assessing whether students understand content (the product of comprehension) instead of supporting the process of comprehending texts.	1
2-4.4: (RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	1
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level thinking skills.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Students are consistently exposed to rich vocabulary and sophisticated syntax through both reading and writing materials. Bluebonnet notes that the text complexity of the Reading Language Arts curriculum is written at two grade levels above students' current level, allowing them to encounter academic language orally before they are able to read it independently. This intentional design ensures that students engage regularly with rigorous, complex texts.

Comprehension instruction centers on purposeful discussion that deepens understanding and builds knowledge. Students engage in rich, text-based conversations, exploring ideas that range from literal to inferential and evaluative. Teacher questioning is intentionally designed to guide students through these varied depths of knowledge, while graphic organizers and activity sheets provide structured support to help students organize and articulate their thinking. Finally, Bluebonnet provides multiple opportunities for students to write across its units. Most lessons include a highly scaffolded writing-about-reading activity, allowing students to respond to texts. Genre-based writing tasks are often connected to the readings; for example, after reading *The Wind in the Willows*, students compose an opinion piece analyzing the story's theme.

2B: Background Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE	SCORE
2.1: Read-aloud opportunities emphasize simple stories or narrative texts. Read-aloud text is not sufficiently complex and/or does not include knowledge-building expository texts (i.e., topics related to science, social studies, current events).	1
2.2: Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	1
2.3: Advanced (Grades 2-5): For students who are automatic with the code, texts for reading are primarily leveled texts that do not feature a variety of diverse, complex, knowledge-building text sets to develop background knowledge in a variety of subject areas.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Read-alouds are carefully chosen to engage students in rich content. The program emphasizes building background knowledge to support reading comprehension and engages students with academically and culturally rich content that connects to real-life and TEKS-aligned topics in history, culture, and literature. As mentioned previously, read-aloud texts are written two grade levels above students' current level, allowing them to encounter academic language orally before they are able to read it on their own.

Topics of texts are carefully selected to deepen background knowledge and build connections year by year, as highlighted in the following chart.

<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Literature Connections</i>	<i>Science & History Connections</i>
Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery Rhymes and Fables • Fairy Tales and Folktales • Colonial and Native Americans • Kings and Queens • America: Our Great Country • Exploring Art: The Beauty We See 	<p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Five Senses • Plants: How Do They Grow? • Farms: From the Ground Up • Seasons and Weather <p>History:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving Our Neighbors • America: Our Great Country
Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing Stories • Fairy Tales • Adventure Stories: Tales From the Edges of the World 	<p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Human Body • Astronomy: Space Exploration • This Planet Rocks • Animals and Habitats <p>History:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early American Civilizations • American Independence • Heading West
Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairy Tales and Tall Tales • Stories of the Ancient Greeks • Flight and the Story of Aviation 	<p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Human Body • Cycles of Nature: Clouds to Raindrops • Insects: All Around <p>History:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient Greeks • War of 1812 • The U.S. Civil War • Land of Opportunity • Fighting for a Cause
Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classic Tales: <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> 	<p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scales, Feathers, and Fur • The Human Body • Flash, Bang, Boom! Exploring Light and Sound • Astronomy: Our Solar System and Beyond <p>History:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient Rome • Early Explorations of North America • Native American Regions and Cultures • Colonial America
Grade 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Narratives • Contemporary Fiction • <i>Letters From Heaven</i> • <i>Treasure Island: X Marks the Spot</i> • Poetry: Wondrous Words 	<p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eureka! The Art of Invention <p>History:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Middle Ages • Building a Nation • American Revolution
Grade 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Narratives • <i>Don Quixote: A Hopeful Knight's Tale</i> • Poetry: Collage of Words • Introduction to Shakespeare 	<p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemical Matter <p>History:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Renaissance: Art and Culture • Early American Civilizations • World War II • Juneteenth and Beyond

However, reviewers did note that Bluebonnet emphasizes history topics that prioritize the histories and cultures of western societies (e.g., Ancient Greeks and Romans, The Middle Ages, The Renaissance, etc.). As such, the team recommends expanding the historical scope of the curriculum to include more diverse perspectives and contributions from non-Western societies to promote a more inclusive understanding of history. Lessons also intentionally activate students' background knowledge. For example, before reading *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, students explore the characteristics of the fiction genre and make connections to other fiction stories they have previously read. Lessons also build on learning from earlier grades. For instance, in Grade 1, when students read the fable *The Milkmaid and the Spilled Milk*, the teacher is prompted to revisit the kindergarten "Farms" unit, reminding students of what they learned about dairy farms.

Finally, content-rich texts are purposefully selected to build upon those introduced in earlier grades. Many genres, including fiction, nonfiction, folktales, and poetry, are incorporated to promote knowledge building and deepen students' understanding across topics. For example, in Grade 3, students read *Rattenborough's Guide to Animals* and learn about warm-blooded and cold-blooded animals, vertebrates and invertebrates, and how scientists classify living things. Bluebonnet thoughtfully scaffolds text complexity by beginning the book with factual information alongside the narrative chapters and progressing toward longer, denser readings that demand higher-level comprehension, interpretation, and application of scientific vocabulary and concepts.



2C: Vocabulary

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR VOCABULARY</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
2.7: Vocabulary worksheets and activities are used with little opportunity for deep understanding of vocabulary words.	1
2.8: Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.	1
2.9: Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly and practiced; students are not given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing.	2
2.10: Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	1
2.11: Explicit instruction in morphology is not present and/or not taught according to a scope and sequence (i.e., simple to complex) consistently throughout K-5 instruction.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

The program features an explicit approach to vocabulary instruction where students engage in multiple activities with words pulled from the read-aloud texts featured during the Language Arts block. Teachers are prompted to use a vocabulary routine that follows an explicit structure. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 1, Sharing Stories, students participate in the program’s routine when learning the word “startled.” The teacher begins the lesson by introducing the word in context, having students repeat it, and explaining its meaning in student-friendly terms (“Startled means surprised.”). A personal example follows to model usage, and students are invited to share their own experiences of being startled to make personal connections. The routine concludes with a brief review and a Making Choices activity where students decide whether someone was or was not startled in different situations. This approach connects word learning to meaningful contexts and reinforces understanding through active use.

Vocabulary instruction focuses on meaningful understanding rather than memorization. Words are taken directly from the texts students are reading and learning from, giving them the opportunity to understand words both within the text and beyond it. For example, the teacher connects the word “effectively” to its use in a familiar read-aloud text (“Sea turtles have oar-shaped flippers for moving through water effectively”) and explains its meaning—doing something well, with purpose and success (Teacher Guide, Grade 3, Unit 2, p. 197). Students

then hear another example sentence and are prompted to share personal or observed experiences of something being done effectively through a think-pair-share activity.

Tier 2 words are highlighted and elaborated on in each lesson to help solidify and generalize the meaning for students. For example, when reading the text *Amphibians: From Land to Water*, students are taught the Tier 2 words “transformation” and “shed.” Reviewers noted that students were given many opportunities to use target vocabulary in oral activities; however, there were no opportunities observed for students to apply the words in writing. Additionally, Tier 3 words like “venomous” and “calcified” (found in *Reptiles: Cold-Blooded, Scaly Vertebrates*), are pointed out, but are not the focus of the “word work” portion of the vocabulary lesson.

Finally, morphology is taught within the Reading Language Arts units. Direct, explicit instruction is combined with opportunities for independent practice using the program’s activity pages. However, the team did note that members were unable to determine the scope and sequence based on the morphological resources made available.

2D: Language Structures

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR LANGUAGE STRUCTURES	SCORE
2.18: Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught implicitly or opportunistically with no evidence of consistent, explicit, simple to complex instruction across all grade levels.	1
2.19: Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	1
2.20: Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Syntax and grammar lessons are explicitly taught within the language comprehension lessons (Grades 3-5) and the foundational skills lessons (Grades K-2). The teacher provides direct, explicit instruction that follows an “I do, we do, you do” approach. For example, in one Grade 3 lesson, teachers are directed to systematically teach nouns, verbs, and adjectives through direct explanation, modeling, and guided practice. The teacher defines each part of speech, models examples using charts and sentences, and engages students in identifying and

describing these words together before having them apply the skill independently on an activity page.

Instruction in grammar and syntax includes direct, explicit teaching and teacher modeling. A significant portion of the lesson also focuses on “we do” activities, where students actively engage in guided practice and apply what they are learning. For example, reviewers noted that in Grade 2, Unit 2, Lesson 12, students revise their own writing with an emphasis on prepositional phrases. This approach helps reinforce grammar instruction through authentic application, allowing students to see how specific language structures enhance their own writing.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR VERBAL REASONING</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
2.26: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text (i.e., picture walking).	2
2.27: Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	3

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

The curriculum incorporates purposeful teacher questioning to promote inferential thinking. For instance, in a unit on ancient Rome, students respond to targeted inferential questions such as the following:

- What did some inhabitants of Rome—and inhabitants of other places that had polytheistic beliefs—do to please the mythical gods they believed in?
- Why were there many farmers in ancient Rome?
- Why did the ancient Roman farmers want to please Saturn, the mythical god of the harvest?

Inferencing is also integrated into classroom discussion questions and writing about reading activities. However, evidence of explicit inference instruction was not found. Thus, students are not explicitly taught how to make inferences or equipped with the specific strategies needed to do so independently.

2F: Literacy Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR LITERACY KNOWLEDGE</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	2
2.34: Genre types and text structures (e.g., cause and effect, problem and solution, sequence, compare and contrast) are not used to understand the purpose of what is being read.	2
2.35: Specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers observed examples of various genre types and text features across the curriculum. Additionally, students are explicitly taught to identify and use text features, including the table of contents, headings, bold print words, photos and captions, charts, maps, glossaries, and diagrams. However, there was no evidence of explicit instruction on the characteristics or features of different genres. Instead, when a new genre is introduced, the teacher provides explicit instruction about the text structures it includes. Thus, students are explicitly taught the various text structures, including compare and contrast, problem and solution, and cause and effect. Additionally, they are prompted to notice the structure's corresponding signal words and how they align with the text structure. For example, while reading about a frog's transformation from a tadpole, the teacher is directed to pause and highlight the following sentence: "Then, the tadpoles will morph, or change, into very different-looking creatures, young amphibians, with very different habits" (Grade 3, Lesson 6: From Water to Land, p. 124). However, the instruction lacks depth and follow-up practice, as students are not explicitly taught how sequence words signal order in a text or given additional opportunities to identify and use them independently.

Section 3: Reading Comprehension

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR READING COMPREHENSION</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
3.1: Comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, noting text structure, inferencing, and fix ups are not taught and practiced throughout the year using a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text that students can accurately decode.	2
3.2: Students are asked to independently apply reading comprehension strategies primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	1
3.3: Emphasis is on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	1
3.4: Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	1
3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

While the curriculum does embed comprehension strategies within its lessons, it does not consistently include explicit instruction in how to apply them. For example, in a lesson on animal classification, students are told they will listen to a text about vertebrate animals and then identify the main idea and supporting details. However, there is no direct explanation of what a main idea is, why it matters, or how to distinguish it from supporting details. Additionally, students are asked to apply the skill during the read-aloud without first seeing a think-aloud demonstration or guided example. Students do have the opportunity to practice comprehension skills in their activity books that include sequencing, main idea, and comparison of texts. Yet again, instances of explicit instruction in the targeted strategies are not always provided.

Students are tasked to apply comprehension strategies to the read-alouds that match the unit of study. Connected texts are included that support the content area of focus. For example, after participating in the read-aloud *Vertebrate Animals*, students read a connected text passage, "Vertebrates or Invertebrates?" and complete a compare and contrast activity that builds further knowledge in a unit focused on animals.

The majority of lessons in Grades K-3 are conducted as whole-group read-alouds, during which students engage in rich discussions about texts connected to the unit’s content area. Independent reading opportunities also center on the same content themes to deepen students’ knowledge of the subject. Predictable texts are used only during the foundational skills portion of instruction. Bluebonnet does include a limited number of decodable texts related to the same content themes for independent reading; however, these are not the primary instructional texts.

Finally, limited time was devoted to monitoring comprehension. For instance, in Grade 3, reviewers noted that this strategy appeared only three times throughout the year. When it was addressed, students were typically prompted to reflect on their understanding by considering questions such as “What questions do you have about the reading at this point?” and recording their thoughts on sticky notes.

4A: Writing – Handwriting

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR HANDWRITING</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
4.1: There is no direct instruction in handwriting.	1
4.2: Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Handwriting is directly taught, and the teacher is directed to explicitly model letter formation. Students are instructed to say the sound(s) each letter makes as they write them. Student activity pages provide opportunities for practice and application. For example, when learning to write the digraphs “sh” and “ch,” the teacher models writing each digraph multiple times while describing the letter formation and sounds. Students then trace the digraphs first on their desks with their fingers and then on an activity page, saying the corresponding sound each time they write it. Furthermore, handwriting instruction is integrated meaningfully alongside the introduction of each new letter or group of letters.

4B: Writing – Spelling

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR SPELLING</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
4.5 There is no evidence of explicit spelling instruction, no spelling scope and sequence, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics/decoding scope and sequence.	2
4.6: There is no evidence of phoneme segmentation or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	1
4.7: Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are based on content or frequency of word use and not connected to decoding/phonics lessons.	2
4.8: Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g., rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).	1
4.9: Spelling patterns for each phoneme are taught all at once (e.g., all spellings of long /ā/) instead of a systematic progression to develop automaticity with individual grapheme/phonemes.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

A speech-to-print approach is utilized where students first focus on hearing and segmenting the individual sounds in a word. They then learn to connect those sounds to their corresponding graphemes in order to spell the word accurately. When a new spelling pattern is introduced, students practice it at both the phoneme level (hearing and saying the sound) and the phonetic level (matching that sound to its written form).

To support this process, sound/spelling cards are used as visual aids that show each sound, the letter(s) that represent it, and often a keyword and picture. These cards help students recall and apply the correct spelling pattern when reading and writing. Additionally, the program's Large Letter Cards are used in the early grades to practice spelling. Here, students practice encoding words by segmenting and blending sounds. Individual students each hold a Large Letter Card that represents a specific sound or spelling pattern (e.g., "m," "u," "ch"). The teacher says a word slowly (in this case, "much"), segmenting it into its phonemes (/m/ /u/ /ch/). As each sound is spoken, the student holding the corresponding letter card steps forward, physically building the word. The class then blends the sounds together to read the completed word aloud. Students also create individual Dictation Journals to practice using spelling patterns both in words and sentences. The team was unable to locate a scope and

sequence for spelling. They recommend that one be developed or clearly referenced within the curriculum materials to ensure systematic and cumulative instruction.

Bluebonnet places a strong emphasis on segmentation and blending when spelling words in the primary grades. Students also learn rules to determine the correct spelling pattern to apply (e.g., using “tch” at the end of a word following a short vowel). A spelling rule list is provided for students to reference as they practice. Beginning in Grade 2, the curriculum introduces spelling lists. While some lists focus more on content than on reinforcing the targeted spelling pattern, most are well aligned with the phonics skill being taught. Finally, spelling patterns for each sound are intentionally introduced and reinforced throughout the scope and sequence. For example, the long “a” sound is first represented by “a_e,” followed by the addition of “ai,” and later “ay.” This ensures that students encounter spelling patterns in a logical, cumulative progression that supports mastery and retention over time.

4C: Writing – Composition

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR COMPOSITION</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
4.15: Writing tasks and prompts are provided with minimal instruction for the skills needed to complete them and little time for planning prior to writing.	1
4.16: Writing assignments are primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	1
4.17: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure are not explicitly taught, and opportunities for practice to develop automaticity are not provided; instead, they are addressed opportunistically.	1
4.18: Writing instruction and assignments are focused primarily on narrative writing or unstructured student choice.	1
4.19: Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).	1
4.20: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

The writing lessons follow an “I do, we do, you do” approach where the teacher explicitly models how to complete the target skill. For example, in Grade 3, Unit 1, after reading a lesson on planning an opinion piece, the teacher clearly models how to form and support an opinion paragraph. Additionally, the program uses a variety of graphic organizers to support the writing process. For example, in that same lesson, students are tasked to write an opinion that connects a theme and a character from a story, supported by textual evidence. They use a brainstorming web with an oval in the center to record their chosen theme and character, and add supporting words and phrases on the spokes extending outward. This structure helps students organize their thinking, connect ideas, and plan a well-supported paragraph.

Bluebonnet Learning explicitly teaches conventions, grammar, and sentence structure within its foundational skills lessons in Grades K-2, while integrating these concepts into the Language Arts lessons in Grades 3-5. Explicit instruction is typically followed by practice pages, and students are also prompted to notice various conventions, parts of speech, and sentence structures in the texts they read. Additionally, Bluebonnet explicitly teaches different types of genres, including reading responses, literary texts, informational writing, correspondence, and argument/opinion pieces. Students engage in this work both by studying authors and by writing their own genre-specific pieces.

The writing process is clearly taught and applied when students engage in it. The program features a “plan, draft, edit” approach, and students use revising and editing checklists to help with this portion of the writing process. For example, in the Grade 1, Unit 3 descriptive writing lesson, first graders are expected to revise and edit their work for foundational skills like correct capitalization and ending punctuation. They also review what they’ve written to make sure they’ve included elements of descriptive writing (e.g., the way things feel, smell, sound, or taste). When students advance to Grade 3, Unit 1, foundational expectations are still included; however, students are also expected to monitor for sentence completion and grammar, ensuring their sentences make sense and are structured correctly. Finally, writing is not taught as a standalone skill and is used as a tool to further reading comprehension. The program emphasizes text-based responses to help students deepen their understanding of what they read by requiring them to use evidence from the text to explain and justify their thinking.

FINDINGS:

Components Supporting Assessment

SECTION 5: Assessment

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

<i>NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR ASSESSMENT</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
5.1: Assessments measure comprehension only without additional assessment measures to determine what is leading to comprehension weaknesses (e.g., phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, listening comprehension).	1
5.2: Assessments include miscue analysis in which misread words are marked correct if the mistake does not substantially alter the meaning of the text.	1
<i>RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR ASSESSMENT</i>	<i>SCORE</i>
5.6: Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled-text gradient.	1
5.7: Foundational skills assessments are primarily running records or similar assessments that are based on whole language or cueing strategies (e.g., guess the word by looking at the first letter, use picture support for decoding).	1
5.8: Phonics skills are not assessed.	1
5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed.	2
5.10: Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	1
5.11: Oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	2
5.12: The suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	1
5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language.	4

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found no evidence of benchmarking according to a leveled gradient in Bluebonnet Learning's practices for assessment. The program provides a series of helpful flow charts to assist teachers with instructional decision-making. For example, in Grade 1, the flow chart provides a step-by-step process for determining which follow-up reading assessments to administer when a student scores 17 or less on the Word Recognition Assessment. It helps ensure that teachers can pinpoint where a student's decoding or word-reading difficulties occur by guiding them through a logical sequence of diagnostic assessments. Additionally, if a word is read incorrectly, it is not counted toward the words correct per minute (WCPM) score.

In the primary grades, there are a number of decoding and fluency assessments that aim to determine foundational skill mastery. These assessments include letter names/sounds, individual word reading, nonsense word reading, and oral reading fluency (ORF). While ORF assessments are administered at the beginning and end of first grade, there is no formal tool in place to monitor students' progress throughout the majority of the school year. Instead, anecdotal running records are used where the teacher listens to the student read aloud and makes notes on an observation sheet. In Grades 2-5, there is a fluency supplement available; however, this resource serves more as a source of review and includes repeated readings and practice. There are also beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year assessments.

Language comprehension is typically assessed through the end-of-unit assessments. These summative assessments focus on vocabulary, inference, finding text evidence, and other comprehension skills. Finally, Bluebonnet Learning's assessments are provided in English only. Thus, educators would need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure that multilingual learners are assessed in their home language. The review team noted that this limitation is common among most core curricula; however, they also mentioned that Bluebonnet may consider developing multilingual assessment options in the future.

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

Overall, the reviewed components for Bluebonnet Learning’s curriculum demonstrate strengths as well as areas that would benefit from further refinement. Continued attention to these elements can help ensure high-quality instruction across Bluebonnet Learning. While an evidence-aligned core curriculum is a critical part of any literacy program, it is no substitute for building a solid foundation of educator and leader knowledge in the science of reading, as well as a coaching system to support fidelity of implementation.

Bluebonnet adopts a “meet students where they are” approach to foundational skills, providing prescriptive guidance for grouping and differentiated instruction. Additionally, the program provides educators with abundant supplemental materials to use during rotation or small-group instruction.

Bluebonnet features robust class discussions that promote comprehension and oral language development, making content accessible to all learners. The integration of the Reading Language Arts strands further strengthens this connection, as vocabulary and writing tasks are intentionally linked back to the shared read-aloud texts to reinforce understanding.

Bluebonnet includes effective visuals to support multilingual learners. These visual supports enhance comprehension and help students make connections between English words and their prior knowledge.

Bluebonnet demonstrates vertical alignment in knowledge-building topics across grade levels, ensuring that concepts and vocabulary are revisited and expanded upon over time.

Bluebonnet provides helpful teacher resources, such as the assessment flow chart, which guides educators in determining appropriate next steps when students experience difficulty with specific foundational skills.

CHALLENGES

Bluebonnet's foundational skills instruction lacks a clear, systematic daily routine to guide consistent skill development. Students would benefit from a more explicit, step-by-step instructional structure. Additionally, the curriculum offers limited opportunities for cumulative practice and spiral review, which are essential for reinforcing previously taught concepts. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on worksheets reduces opportunities for authentic application and more engaging practice experiences that deepen understanding.

Bluebonnet provides limited instruction in phonemic awareness beyond kindergarten, and explicit foundational skills support decreases significantly in the upper grades. Strengthening these areas would help ensure the continued development of critical word recognition skills across grade levels.

While Bluebonnet effectively uses discussion to support comprehension and oral language development, it provides limited explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. For instance, the program includes inference-level questions following a read-aloud, but it does not explicitly teach what an inference is or model how students can make inferences while reading.

Bluebonnet places a strong emphasis on Western civilizations within its content-specific texts. Expanding the curriculum to include a broader range of cultures, histories, and perspectives would provide students with more opportunities for "mirrors and windows," texts that both reflect their own experiences and offer insight into those of others. Additionally, descriptions of Native Americans tend to be limited, offering little depth on essential topics such as displacement, contested treaties, and the long-standing oppression their communities have faced. For example, in Grade 3, Unit 8, Lesson 1, the curriculum emphasizes cultural adaptation and diversity rather than conflict, displacement, colonization, or treaties. There is no mention (in this lesson) of genocide, forced removal, or European-Native treaties.

Bluebonnet's online-only materials made the program challenging to implement. The sheer volume of digital pages was overwhelming, and without a clearly defined scope and sequence, it was difficult to identify coherence and progression across units and grade levels.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE

Curriculum Navigation Report

Bluebonnet Learning, Grades K-5

Bluebonnet Learning Response to Reading League

April 2026

Introduction | Bluebonnet Learning Program

Bluebonnet Learning wishes to thank the Reading League for a thorough and insightful review of the Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts (RLA) instructional materials. Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA instructional materials are designed to address student learning using research-based instructional strategies (RBIS) to ensure students are receiving high-quality, grade-level content aligned to the science of reading:

- **K–3 Foundational Skills** units follow a systematic scope and sequence aligned to the Texas state standards. The foundational skills lessons are designed to include the development of oral language and explicit instruction for decoding, spelling, and handwriting, which includes cursive instruction beginning in grade 2. The decodable readers are meticulously sequenced to include sound and letter relationships that students have previously learned. These engaging readers enable students to practice sound-spelling patterns taught through decoding, with lesson guidance supporting whole-group and small-group instruction. Through cumulative practice and review, the K–3 skills strand develops students’ ability to decode increasingly complex words, preparing them to independently engage with grade-level text in grades 4 and 5.
- **K–5 RLA** units of study are strategic and coherent, with intentionally sequenced units to build upon prior learning. This knowledge-based instructional approach connects topics within and across grades and introduces cross-curricular content that builds knowledge in science and history, while including great works of literature. Not only are students exposed to complex, grade-level texts, but they also engage in the inquiry and research process to create written responses grounded in text evidence. Writing is a daily part of each lesson and builds from short responses to extended written responses.

Additional resources embedded in the program include qualitative and quantitative text complexity measures for read-alouds and texts in Student Readers. A Foundational Skills Appendix is also included in the Teacher Resources sections of Unit 1 in grades 4–5. This resource provides teachers with a scope and sequence along with direct, explicit, and systematic instructional strategies and routines to support students with decoding multisyllabic words, understanding syllable types, and applying advanced knowledge of syllable division patterns.

Bluebonnet Learning Response | Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA

Challenges

Challenge #1

Bluebonnet’s foundational skills instruction lacks a clear, systematic daily routine to guide consistent skill development. Students would benefit from a more explicit, step-by-step instructional structure. Additionally, the curriculum offers limited opportunities for cumulative practice and spiral review, which are essential for reinforcing previously taught concepts. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on worksheets reduces opportunities for authentic application and more engaging practice experiences that deepen understanding.

Response to Challenge #1

Bluebonnet Learning K–3 Foundational Skills is intentionally sequenced to provide clear, systematic instruction that supports both teachers and students. Instruction begins with phonological awareness and progresses to sound-spelling correspondences, introducing the most common patterns first and expanding to additional spellings as students develop proficiency. Lessons follow a consistent structure aligned to students’ skill development, supporting instructional coherence and predictable structure and routines.

Across units, the materials embed intentional cumulative review to reinforce previously taught skills over time. This review is integrated through multiple instructional routines, including:

- Decodable texts that align to the phonics scope and sequence and allow students to practice newly introduced Tricky Words and sound-spelling patterns while applying previously learned code knowledge.
- Dictation activities that strengthen connections among listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Word chaining routines that support phonemic manipulation and spelling flexibility through the systematic building and reading of related words.

To support sustained engagement and effective practice, Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts and K–3 Foundational Skills incorporates varied instructional modalities, including songs, rhymes, movement, Word Work routines, partner reading, small group activities, and games. These approaches are designed to promote active participation and meaningful practice beyond worksheet-based tasks.

Challenge #2

Bluebonnet provides limited instruction in phonemic awareness beyond kindergarten, and explicit foundational skills support decreases significantly in the upper grades. Strengthening these areas would help ensure the continued development of critical word recognition skills across grade levels.

Response to Challenge #2

Bluebonnet Learning K–3 Foundational Skills provides systematic phonemic awareness instruction aligned with the Texas standards for Reading Language Arts, which require explicit phonemic awareness instruction in grades K–2. Across these grades, the standards call for students to blend phonemes and to manipulate phonemes within base words as part of early reading development.

Because Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts—including K–3 Foundational Skills—has been reviewed and determined to be fully aligned with Texas standards, phonemic awareness instruction is intentionally sustained beyond kindergarten rather than tapered. In grades 1 and 2, these skills are reinforced through consistent teacher-led chaining routines that provide structured opportunities for students to blend phonemes, attend to changes in individual sounds within words, and manipulate phonemes to form new words. This approach supports continued development of phonemic awareness as students’ progress through the early grades.

Challenge #3

While Bluebonnet effectively uses discussion to support comprehension and oral language development, it provides limited explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. For instance, although the program includes inference-level questions following a read-aloud, it does not explicitly teach what an inference is or model how students can make inferences while reading.

Response to Challenge #3

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts provides systematic, explicit instruction in comprehension strategies across all RLA units with additional support embedded in K–3 Foundational Skills. Strategies are modeled during teacher-led read-a-louds in grades K–3 and reinforced through whole-group reading and re-reading routines in grades 4–5. Teachers intentionally model strategy use and guide student application, gradually releasing responsibility as students’ progress. Over the course of a unit, students move from identifying comprehension elements, such as a text’s central idea, to independently applying these strategies in writing.

Challenge #4

Bluebonnet places a strong emphasis on Western civilizations within its content-specific texts. Expanding the curriculum to include a broader range of cultures, histories, and perspectives would

provide students with more opportunities for “mirrors and windows,” texts that both reflect their own experiences and offer insight into those of others. Additionally, descriptions of Native Americans tend to be limited, offering little depth on essential topics such as displacement, contested treaties, and the long-standing oppression Native communities have faced. For example, in Grade 3, Unit 8, Lesson 1, the curriculum emphasizes cultural adaptation and diversity rather than conflict, displacement, colonization, or treaties. There is no mention (in this lesson) of genocide, forced removal, or European-Native treaties.

Response to Challenge #4

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts provides students with an age-appropriate introduction to essential historical ideas, establishing a strong foundation for deeper and more complex historical analysis in later grades. Through its integration of literature, science, the arts, and history, Bluebonnet Learning encourages students to deepen their understanding of how our society has changed over time. This holistic approach not only enriches students’ intellectual development but also prepares students with the background knowledge necessary to be successful in later study. This approach cultivates a depth of understanding and appreciation for historical contexts, enabling students to draw connections between past and present, while handling sensitive topics with care and nurturing civic responsibility.

Challenge #5

Bluebonnet’s online-only materials made the program challenging to implement. The sheer volume of digital pages was overwhelming, and without a clearly defined scope and sequence, it was difficult to identify coherence and progression across units and grade levels.

Response to Challenge #5

Bluebonnet Learning are print-based, high-quality instructional materials with a clearly defined scope and sequence. Instruction is delivered through teacher guides, student activity books, readers, and ancillary materials that are organized into sequenced units and lessons, making coherence and progression across units and grade levels clear and consistent.

Districts order and receive complete sets of printed materials for teachers and students through the state’s procurement system (EMAT), ensuring access to a comprehensive, organized instructional package that supports consistent implementation.

Findings

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

1.3: Supporting materials do not provide a systematic scope and sequence nor opportunities for practice and review of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding) | Score: 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts and K–3 Foundational Skills provides a clearly articulated, systematic scope and sequence supported by comprehensive pacing guidance at the program, course, and unit levels. This guidance is documented across the Program & Implementation Guide, course-level Pacing, Scope & Sequence Guides, in the Unit Overview of each Teacher Guide, and in several Teacher Guide Resource or Appendix sections—all of which explain how skills and knowledge build intentionally within and across grades.

Across grades K–3, foundational skills instruction includes explicit, sequenced phonics, encoding, and decoding with regular opportunities for cumulative practice. Students engage in consistent instructional routines that provide practice in isolation and in connected text, including chaining routines, dictation, fully decodable texts, and additional whole-group, collaborative, and independent activities aligned to previously taught sound-spelling patterns. Skills are intentionally revisited and reinforced over time, with complexity increasing gradually while ensuring students are never asked to read or spell patterns that have not yet been taught. This design supports systematic review, sustained practice, and coherent skill development rather than isolated instruction.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

1.12: Phoneme awareness is not assessed and monitored (e.g., a student’s ability to identify the initial, final, and medial phonemes in a word) | Score: 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning includes multiple, systematic tools and routines for assessing and monitoring students’ phoneme awareness across grades K–1, including students’ ability to identify and manipulate initial, medial, and final phonemes. In kindergarten, teachers use embedded observational assessments and progress monitoring tools—such as segmenting, blending, word reading, fluency, and writing measures—to track phoneme level skills throughout the year. The materials provide clear guidance for identifying students who need additional support and specify which progress monitoring tools to use, how often to administer them, and how to document growth over time. In grade 1, the program includes structured, one-on-one phoneme level progress monitoring with explicit scoring criteria that help teachers analyze errors. Mid-unit assessments and designated Pausing Points further support ongoing monitoring and targeted reteaching. Across lessons, checks for understanding and follow-up activities

ensure that phoneme awareness is consistently assessed, reinforced, and supported rather than treated as a one-time skill.

1C: Phonics and Phonics Decoding

1.19: The first letters of key words for letter-sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ě/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ǒ/) | Score 2

Response

Across K–1 Foundational Skills, the program consistently uses phonemically accurate key words when introducing and reinforcing letter-sound correspondences. In kindergarten, for example, short vowels are introduced using words that contain the target pure phoneme in appropriate positions, with explicit teacher guidance and multisensory routines to support accurate perception and articulation. Students analyze sounds through listening, repetition, and visual supports such as mirrors to confirm correct mouth position.

This phonemic alignment is maintained in grade 1 through explicit segmentation routines, phoneme level analysis, and consistent use of aligned key words and instructional tools, including Sound Cards, Vowel Code Flip Books, and Individual Code Charts. Short vowels are introduced using instructionally appropriate examples that clearly model the target phoneme, ensuring students receive reliable, consistent representations of each sound. Together, these practices demonstrate that the program systematically teaches pure phonemes using accurate key words and structured routines that support correct phoneme identification, production, and encoding.

1.25: There are few opportunities provided for word-level decoding practice of new phonics patterns and interleaving practice for prior phonics patterns | Score 2

Response

The program offers extensive, systematic, and varied opportunities for students to practice decoding at the word level—both with newly introduced phonics patterns and previously taught skills. For example, the kindergarten sequence is intentionally designed to introduce a small set of consonants and a vowel early in the year so students can begin decoding real words immediately; this early decoding practice establishes the foundation for interleaving skills across subsequent units.

Likewise, grade 1 materials provide systematic decoding practice that moves from isolation to connected text and builds directly on prior instruction, with lesson objectives following a clear progression from simple to complex word structures, ensuring cumulative practice across units. In grades 2 and 3, the materials provide systematic decoding and encoding practice for multisyllabic words through progression from isolation to connected text.

1D: Fluency

1.44: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency | Score 2

Response

Across grades 1–3, the Bluebonnet Learning RLA materials include extensive, systematic, and varied opportunities for students to build word-level fluency, practice decoding patterns to automaticity, and apply fluency skills in multiple instructional settings. For example, in grade 1, word-level fluency is explicitly and repeatedly practiced in multiple formats, not only through connected text, while grade 2 materials provide structured, repeated opportunities for word-level fluency practice across independent, partner, and teacher-guided settings. Grade 3 materials continue to emphasize word-level fluency through structured lists, decodable phrases, and controlled texts.

2C: Vocabulary

2.9: Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly and practiced; students are not given opportunities to use them in speech, see them in print, and use them in writing | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning lessons embed vocabulary in listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks, ensuring students repeatedly encounter and apply vocabulary words.

Across grades K–5, Word Work activities reinforce listening to and speaking with vocabulary words, while reading and writing with vocabulary words occurs throughout grades 1–5. As students gain more literary skills, they encounter more complex texts with glossaries, and do more writing in response to reading, with multiple written assignments that require students to accurately use Tier 2 vocabulary.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

2.27: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning RLA explicitly teaches inferencing and consistently requires students to justify their thinking with text-based evidence. Teachers prompt students to locate and cite specific quotes to support inferences during discussion and written responses, reinforcing that conclusions must be grounded in the text rather than picture clues alone. Instruction integrates listening, speaking, and writing as students defend claims, respond to peers, and transfer ideas from discussion to written analysis. Teachers model this process through guided examples and think-alouds, supporting students as they plan, justify, and write evidence-based inferences. Together, these practices demonstrate that inferencing is explicitly taught, modeled, and applied within authentic reading and writing tasks.

2.28: Students do not practice inferencing as a discrete skill | Score 3**Response**

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA lessons embed inferencing within knowledge-building reading and writing tasks, where strategies are explicitly modeled and practiced in context. This design reflects research indicating that early reading comprehension develops through the integration of accurate word recognition, oral language, vocabulary, and background knowledge, rather than through isolated strategy practice.

K–3 instruction focuses on building coherent knowledge through sequenced texts, strengthening listening comprehension through read-a-louds and discussion, and developing academic language in meaningful contexts. Within this work, students explain ideas, justify interpretations with evidence, and connect information across texts, engaging in inferential thinking as part of authentic meaning-making. As students’ progress through the program, they practice inferencing with increasing independence, laying the foundation for more explicit attention to comprehension processes in later grades.

2F: Literacy Knowledge**2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught | Score 2****Response**

Examples from multiple grade levels in Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA demonstrate systematic instruction on genre characteristics and their application in both reading and writing tasks. Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA units teach genre features through mentor texts, explicit modeling, and scaffolded writing tasks, as aligned to the Texas state standards.

2.34: Genre types and text structures (e.g., cause and effect, problem and solution, sequence, compare and contrast) are not used to understand the purpose of what is being read | Score 2**Response**

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA includes explicit instruction on genre types and text features in multiple units across each grade level. The program includes specific instruction on literary genres such as nursery rhyme, poetry, fables, folktales, fairy tales, tall tales, myths, and personal narratives, as well as informational, persuasive, and argumentative texts, to help students understand how structure conveys meaning. Instruction on genre consistently includes the author’s purpose, like bringing enjoyment or new information to the reader, or persuading the audience.

2.35: Specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced | Score 2**Response**

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA units include direct instruction and guided practice with text structures and their associated signal words to strengthen both comprehension and writing. For example, in grades

2 and 3, students learn to identify and apply signal words that support sequencing, cause and effect, and opinion and informational writing. Instruction is reinforced through reading and writing tasks in which students use signal words to organize ideas, summarize events, and connect claims with evidence. Across units, teachers provide scaffolds such as modeling, graphic organizers, and guided practice to support students in applying text structures and signal words in context, with opportunities to demonstrate understanding in increasingly independent writing.

3: Reading Comprehension

3.1: Comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, noting text structure, inferencing, and fixups are not taught and practiced throughout the year using a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text that students can accurately decode | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA uses a gradual release of responsibility to teach comprehension strategies at every grade level. Across grades K–3, comprehension instruction occurs primarily in the RLA strand through teacher-led read-a-louds and discussion of complex texts, with select opportunities to apply strategies to decodable texts in Foundational Skills as students’ decoding skills develop. Instruction is scaffolded across multiple lessons, moving from teacher modeling and guided practice to increasing student independence rather than following a single lesson “I do, we do, you do” structure. As students’ progress through grades 1–3, comprehension tasks become more complex and independent, including retelling, summarizing, identifying central ideas with supporting details, making predictions based on text structure, and using text features to support understanding.

In grades 4 and 5, teachers continue to model and guide comprehension processes—such as identifying themes, paraphrasing, and citing text evidence—before gradually releasing responsibility as students apply these strategies independently in discussion and writing. This progression reflects a coherent, developmentally appropriate approach to comprehension instruction across the program.

3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading | Score 2

Response

Examples from across grade levels in Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA demonstrate that students learn comprehension monitoring strategies such as correcting and confirming predictions, generating questions before, during, and after reading, tracking understanding of vocabulary, and making adjustments such as re-reading, using background knowledge, asking questions, and annotating—as required by the Texas state standards.

4B: Writing – Spelling

4.5: There is no evidence of explicit spelling instruction, no spelling scope and sequence, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics/decoding scope and sequence. | Score 2

Response

Spelling instruction is systematically embedded throughout the Foundational Skills program in grades K–3 and integrated into Reading Language Arts units in grades 4 and 5. Instruction begins in kindergarten, with students connecting sounds to spellings and progressing to increasingly complex patterns. Across grades, students practice encoding alongside decoding through explicit instruction, guided practice, and dictation routines, with opportunities for cumulative review and assessment. Spelling expectations and routines are explicitly outlined in unit level Teacher Guides, ensuring consistent, developmentally appropriate instruction across K–5.

4.7: Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are based on content or frequency of word use and not connected to decoding/phonics lessons | Score 2

Response

Across the K–3 Foundational Skills units, spelling lists feature words with sound/spelling patterns that have been explicitly taught as aligned to the decoding scope and sequence. In RLA units for grades 4 and 5, spelling lists include words that both align with the knowledge topic of the unit *and* feature explicitly taught sound spelling patterns.

5: Assessment

5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning includes multiple, systematic tools and routines for assessing and monitoring students' phoneme awareness across grades K–1, including students' ability to identify and manipulate initial, medial, and final phonemes. In kindergarten, teachers use embedded observational assessments and progress monitoring tools—such as segmenting, blending, word reading, fluency, and writing measures—to track phoneme-level skills throughout the year. The materials provide clear guidance for identifying students who need additional support and specify which progress monitoring tools to use, how often to administer them, and how to document growth over time.

In grade 1, the program includes structured, one-on-one phoneme-level progress monitoring with explicit scoring criteria that help teachers analyze errors. Mid-unit assessments and designated Pausing Points further support ongoing monitoring and targeted reteaching. Across lessons, checks for understanding and follow-up activities ensure that phoneme awareness is consistently assessed, reinforced, and supported rather than treated as a one-time skill.

5.11: Oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments are not used | Score 2**Response**

Across grades 1–5, Bluebonnet Learning RLA and Foundational Skills provides regular, age-appropriate opportunities for fluency monitoring and assessment, with decoding accuracy treated as a foundational component of fluency. Beginning in grade 1, students participate in oral reading fluency assessments that include reading aloud from decodable or grade-level texts, analysis of errors, and consideration of accuracy, rate, and expression, alongside word reading in isolation measures that focus specifically on decoding accuracy.

This approach becomes increasingly explicit in grades 2 and 3, where teachers are guided to analyze error patterns to inform targeted support and to prioritize accuracy when interpreting fluency results. In later grades, fluency assessment expands to include unit-level and benchmark diagnostics that measure oral reading accuracy, rate, and comprehension, with optional tools for progress monitoring as needed. Across grade levels, fluency assessments are embedded throughout the year to monitor growth over time, reflecting a coherent and intentional design that emphasizes accurate, smooth, and meaningful reading rather than speed alone.

5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language | Score 4**Response**

The Texas State Board of Education Approved Aprendizaje Bluebonnet Artes del lenguaje y lectura K–5 and Destrezas Fundamentales K–3 in November of 2025. These programs provide opportunities for Multilingual learners to be assessed in Spanish. Aprendizaje Bluebonnet materials also include a Biliteracy Resource Guide, which contains different unit and lesson level comparison documents detailing the interconnectedness of the English and Spanish programs, including assessments.